

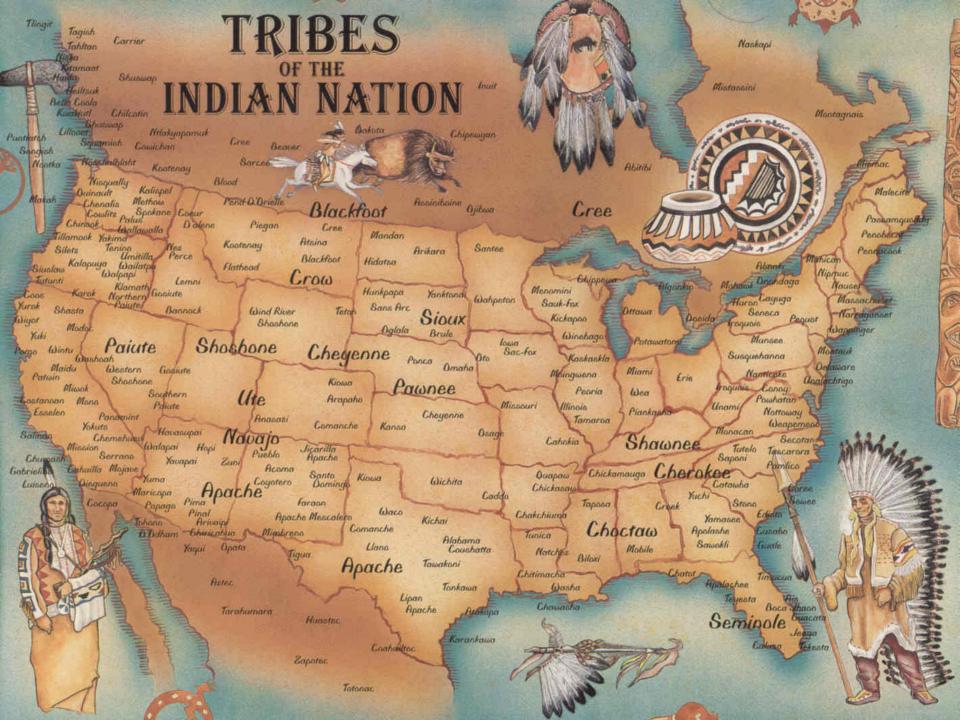


Reexamining Developmental Theory,
Best Practice and Evidence in Early
Childhood Programs with Indigenous
Populations: American Indian
Perspectives

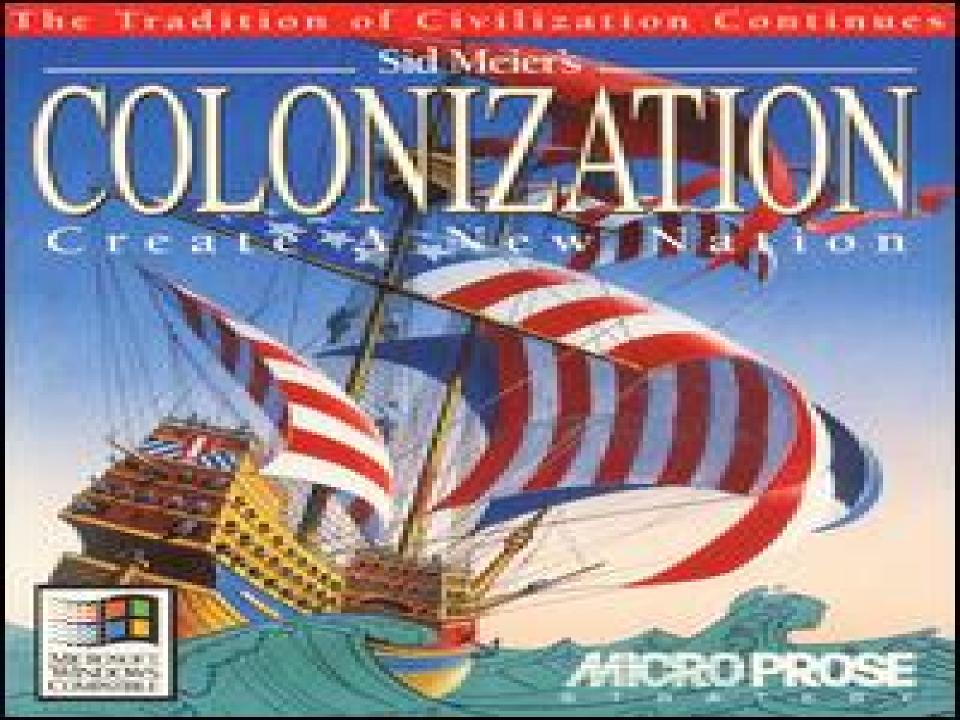
The Arizona Early Childhood Summit Scottsdale Resort and Conference Center April 22, 2008

Dr. Michael Niles (Wakshe)
Dr. Lisa Byers

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY







Welcome & Who We Are

Overview of Presentation:

- 1. The concepts of "best practice" and "evidenced-based practice;"
- 2. Formal research-based early childhood programs that are considered to be "best practice" and "evidenced-based" and their implications for policy and practice with American Indian children;
- 3. The reasons for exclusion of American Indian children in early childhood intervention research;
- 4. The role that the United States federal government has played in shaping educational services for American Indian children;
- 5. Theoretical context of the education of American Indian children.



What is Best practice and Evidenced-based Practice in Early Childhood Research?

- Typically derived from formal research studies that demonstrate empirical results for minority children who are at-risk;
- The 3 most well-known (worldwide) ECI programs are cited as providing "best practice" evidence:
 - Participants in the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program were found to have higher rates of high-school graduation (67% vs. 49%) at age 19, (71% vs. 54%) at age 27.
 - Participation in the Abecedarian Preschool Project was found to be associated with a higher rate of attending four-year college (36% vs. 14%) and more years of education at age 21.
 - The Chicago Child-Parent Center (CPC) Preschool Program. Participants in the CPC preschool program demonstrate higher rates of school completion relative to those in the comparison group (49.7% vs. 38.5% at age 20; 65.8% vs. 54.2% at age 22).
- Is this "evidence" that similar results would be found for American Indians?

Most Frequently Cited Early Childhood Intervention Programs

Program	Туре	Age at Last Follow-Up	Number of Citations
High/Scope Perry Preschool Program	Model	43	25
Carolina Abecedarian Project	Model	21	22
Houston Parent-Child Development Center	Model	11	14
Yale Child Welfare Research Program	Model	14	10
Chicago Child-Parent Centers	Large Scale	24	18
Milwaukee Project	Model	14	8
Syracuse Family Development Program	Model	15	8
Early Training Project	Model	20	6
Consortium for Longitudinal Studies	Model	27	6
Philadelphia Project	Model	18	6
Infant and Health Development Program	Model	8	6
Educational Testing Service Head Start Study	Large Scale	8	5
New Haven Follow-Through Study	Large Scale	9	5
Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy Project	Model	17	5
Harlem Training Project	Model	12	4
University of Rochester Nurse Home Visiting Program	Model	4	4
Gordon Parent Education Program	Model	10	3
New York State Experimental Pre-kindergarten	Large Scale	8	3
PSID Head Start Longitudinal Study	Large Scale	25	3

American Indian Children in most Frequently Cited Early Childhood Intervention Programs

Program	Туре	AI in sample	Longitudinal Follow-up
High/Scope Perry Preschool Program	Model	No	Yes
Carolina Abecedarian Project	Model	No	Yes
Houston Parent-Child Development Center	Model	No	Yes
Yale Child Welfare Research Program	Model	No	Yes
Chicago Child-Parent Centers	Large Scale	No	Yes
Milwaukee Project	Model	No	Yes
Syracuse Family Development Program	Model	No	Yes
Early Training Project	Model	No	Yes
Consortium for Longitudinal Studies	Model	No	Yes
Philadelphia Project	Model	No	Yes
Infant and Health Development Program	Model	No	Yes
Educational Testing Service Head Start Study	Large Scale	No	Yes
New Haven Follow-Through Study	Large Scale	No	Yes
Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy Project	Model	No	Yes
Harlem Training Project	Model	No	Yes
University of Rochester Nurse Home Visiting Program	Model	No	Yes
Gordon Parent Education Program	Model	No	Yes
New York State Experimental Pre-kindergarten	Large Scale	No	Yes
PSID Head Start Longitudinal Study	Large Scale	No	Yes

Best Practices with Indigenous Communities

- In many Indigenous communities, "best practice" is more complex than educational attainment;
- "Best practices" is knowing one's culture: the basis for identity.
 Identity is strongly associated with family roles, relationships, and responsibilities;
- In many indigenous communities, "best practice" involves gaining an understanding of how this identity forms and the transmission of cultural from one generation to another;
- "Best practices" in Indigenous communities requires incorporating the Native language, ceremonies, stories, dances, and art into their early childhood program curriculum.



Reasons for Exclusion of Indigenous Children in Early Childhood Interventions and Research

Seven primary reasons

- Most researchers have not developed a mutual and longterm relationship with Indigenous communities;
- Formal research on early childhood intervention programs has often ignored culturally conditioned values and practices of those who are the intended targets of such programs (2 parts to this);
 - mainstream, Euro-Western instructional methods often do not fit the learning styles, interests or needs of Indigenous children; and
 - b. the predominantly Euro-Western definition of what is established as a "best practice" or evidenced based" program perpetuates the colonial, assimilationist effects of education upon Indigenous children.

Reasons for Exclusion Cont.

- 3. Many large-scale research and evaluation activities of early childhood programs exclude tribal programs from the population eligible for inclusion in research;
- 4. Indigenous children also vary by ancestral affiliations and across the cultural norms that affect the environments in which they live;
- Research must take into account the unique cultural characteristics of children and families and the goals and values of the local communities.
- 6. The heterogeneity of different Indigenous communities, each with their own distinct history, language, culture, and social organization makes research very time consuming;
- 7. Gaining tribal acceptance and permission to conduct research is key and takes time to develop.



Historical Role of United States Government

- The mandatory relocation of American Indian children to government-run boarding schools became United States policy with the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830;
- The purpose of this displacement, was to "kill the Indian save the man;"
- American Indian children were prohibited to speak their own languages or practice their own religions;
- This process was the outcome of a long series of annual meetings held at Lake Mohonk, New York, beginning in 1883;
- Calling themselves "Friends of the Indian," these conferences initially brought together the most influential individuals of the time.



Historical Role of United States Government Cont.

Three principle messages emerged from Lake Mohonk:

- Need to reinforce the concept of individualism among Native people,
- Native people should be universally "educated" to hold eurowestern beliefs, and that,
- all Native people, properly educated and individualized, should be absorbed as citizens of the United States;
- George Manypenny, United States Indian Commissioner, stated in 1856, for assimilation to occur, it was necessary that Indians learn to say "I" instead of, "we," "me" instead of "us," "mine" instead of" ours;"
- ECI was found to be an ideal mechanism to maintain this colonization, which continues to this day;
- A major colonizing effort in contemporary times is the dominant world application of research methods (i.e. scientific methods) in ECI program development and the lack of American Indian cultural influences in major theoretical models of development.



Theoretical Context of Early Intervention with American Indian Communities

- In the recent book entitled Supporting Indigenous Children's Development: Community-University Partnerships (2006), Ball and Pence quote a Saulteau Nation social development officer as stating:
 - If it's [education] done the way it's always been done, none of our Indigenous peoples [sic] are going to get educated. Indigenous peoples [sic] have always been so laughed at, so put down, and have dropped out of school so often that when they do want to continue their education, they can't even get in and if they do, they'll give up too fast because it's not culturally relevant (Ball & Pence, 2006, p.79);
 - Since the 1960's, the theoretical foundations of early childhood intervention (ECI) have remained almost unchanged:
 - Ecological systems theory
 - Risk and resilience theory
 - Regardless of their applicability to this population.



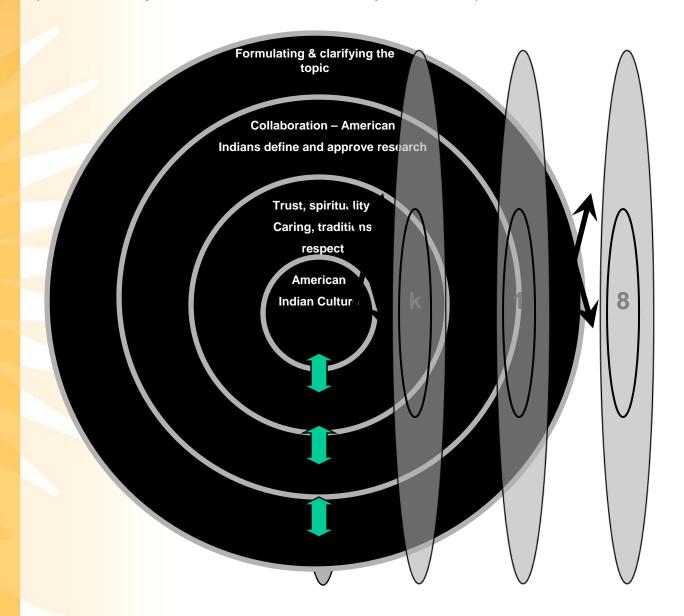
Limitations of Major theories

- <u>Ecological systems theory (EST</u>). Ecological systems theory specifies that outcomes of development are substantially affected by the social contexts, both proximal and distal, in which children are embedded;
- Most "evidenced-based" research using EST has been on white, middle-class, two-parent families;
- A more ecologically valid approach in collaborating with American Indian communities would be to place greater emphasis on the diversity of tribes and those unique tribal elements (i.e. language and ceremonies) that can shape programs in these communities;
- <u>Risk and Resilience Theory</u>. The constructs of risk and protective factors are the cornerstones of risk and resilience theory and many comprehensive reviews have identified the risk and protective factors for ethnic minority populations;
- The definition of risk in American Indian communities is not well defined.



Culturally-based Ecological Model for Conducting Research with American Indian Communities

(For details please refer to manuscript handout)





Important Contemporary Approaches (Montessori)

<u>Cultural Compatibility Theory</u>. The central principle of cultural compatibility theory is <u>congruence</u>. The more closely human interactions in the school and classroom are aligned with those of the community, the more likely the goals of the school will be reached.

This theory predicts that <u>if</u> children have continued direct participation in the educational process by using language development as a key to intellectual development

and if;

the curriculum incorporates the spiritual and economic realities that most American Indian children face today,

then the ECI program will promote longer and more culturally relevant outcomes.





Jesse Clark
Native Elder &
Visionary of
Anishinabe
Academy



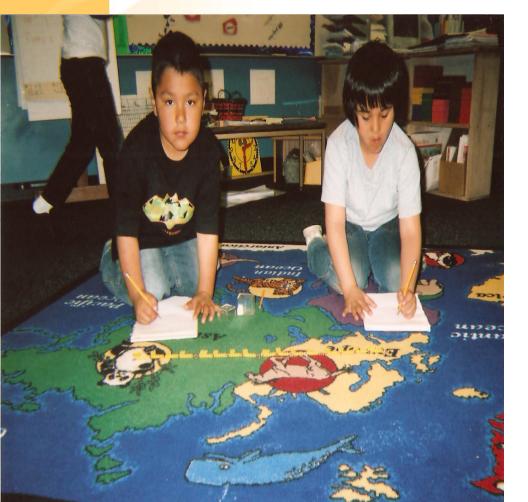
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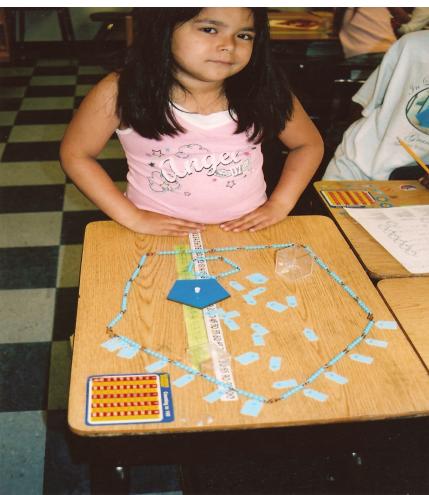


Cultural compatibility encourages experiential learning that is culturally-based

Counting using bead chains

Geometry using bead chains





Conclusions and Discussion

- In the United States, the more than 500 American Indian tribes colonized by what became a majority non-indigenous society dominate world research continues this colonization;
- This presentation provided two alternative theoretical models (Culturally-based ecological model& Cultural Compatibility Theory)
 - Use American Indian culture as the single most important element in ECI
- Most American Indian tribes in the United States are now actively engaged in reclaiming their culture;
- Others are "walking in two worlds" preparing their children and young people for growing up in both their own specific culture and community and in the culture and communities of the surrounding society;



Conclusions and Discussion Cont.

- These communities envision a future that is respectfully informed by a rich past and a multi-faceted present;
- A postmodern approach to the theoretical ECI program designs, embraces diversity and with it a large measure of indeterminacy;
- Unlike most contemporary ECI theoretical models, the models presented today are not based on a singular construction of pre-established content and outcomes.
- It is hoped that they elicit a generation of new ideas and possibilities not fully foreseeable in advance.



Questions/Comments?



Children of Anishinabe Academy (Minnesota – USA)

Where our past meets our future

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Author Contact Information – Michael Niles

Dr. Michael Niles (tribal name of Wakshe – "Red Fox") is an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation of Oklahoma (descended from the Fox family clan) and assistant professor of Social Work at Arizona State University, Phoenix, Arizona. Interests of Dr. Niles include early childhood intervention programs and American Indian children (translational); development of social and emotional competence; First Nations Peoples; children's mental health; prevention science; and program evaluation.

Michael D. Niles, M.S.W., Ph.D. Assistant Professor

Office of American Indian Projects
Coordinator, Indigenous Early Intervention Alliance
School of Social Work
College of Public Programs
Arizona State University
411 North Central Avenue, Suite #880M
Phoenix, AZ 85004-0689
(602) 496-0102

Email: Michael.Niles@asu.edu
Webpage: http://indigenous-early-intervention.com/



Author Contact Information – Lisa Byers

Dr. Lisa Byers is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation and assistant professor of Social Work at the University of Oklahoma, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Research interests of Dr. Byers include the mental and physical health of First Nations Peoples; parenting behavior; emotional competence; prevention science; and program evaluation.

Lisa Byers, M.S.W., Ph.D. Assistant Professor

The University of Oklahoma-Tulsa School of Social Work 4502 E. 41st Street Tulsa, OK 74135-2512 (918) 660-3660

Email: lbyers@ou.edu

Webpage: http://ou.edu/socialwork/faculty/index.html

